

Haemophilus Influenzae Type B (Hib Disease)

What is haemophilus influenzae type B (Hib)?

Hib are bacteria that may cause a variety of diseases, including blood infection, meningitis (inflammation of the lining of the brain), pneumonia, and arthritis.

Who gets Hib disease?

Anyone can get Hib infection, but it is most common in children under the age of 5 years. The elderly and persons with weakened immune systems are also at a higher risk of developing the disease, though it is unusual.

How is Hib disease spread?

Hib disease is spread by contact of droplets or mucus from the nose and throat of an infected person. The contagious period varies and, unless treated, may persist for as long as the organism is present in the nose and throat, even after symptoms have disappeared.

How common is Hib disease?

Since the introduction of the Hib vaccine in 1988, cases have declined by 95% in infants and young children. Before the use of an effective vaccine, Hib was the most common cause of bacterial meningitis in children. In the United States, Hib disease occurs primarily in underimmunized children and infants too young to receive the vaccine.

What are the symptoms of Hib disease?

Symptoms generally appear in less than ten days after exposure, commonly within two to four days. Fever is present in all forms of Hib infection. Other symptoms of Hib depend on the part of the body affected. Hib can result in sinus infections, earaches, and skin infections. Hib may also cause serious illnesses like meningitis (characterized by the usually sudden onset of fever, lethargy, vomiting, and a stiff and/or rigid neck and back), pneumonia, epiglottitis (inflammation of upper airway), and blood stream infections.

What is the treatment for Hib disease?

Hib infections are treated with antibiotics. Patients are no longer contagious after taking the antibiotics for one to two days.

Are there complications from Hib disease?

Hib disease is very dangerous. Most children with Hib disease need care in the hospital. Even with treatment, as many as 1 out of 20 children with Hib meningitis dies. As many as 1 out of 5 children who survive Hib meningitis will have brain damage or become deaf.

How can Hib disease be prevented?

All children should be immunized with the Hib vaccine beginning at approximately two months of age. Close contacts with a person infected with Hib may require immediate preventative antibiotics depending on circumstances. Most people over 5 years old do not need Hib vaccine. However, you should discuss getting the vaccine with your physician if you have sickle cell anemia or if your immune system is weakened.

How do I get more information on Hib disease?

Calhoun County Public Health Department

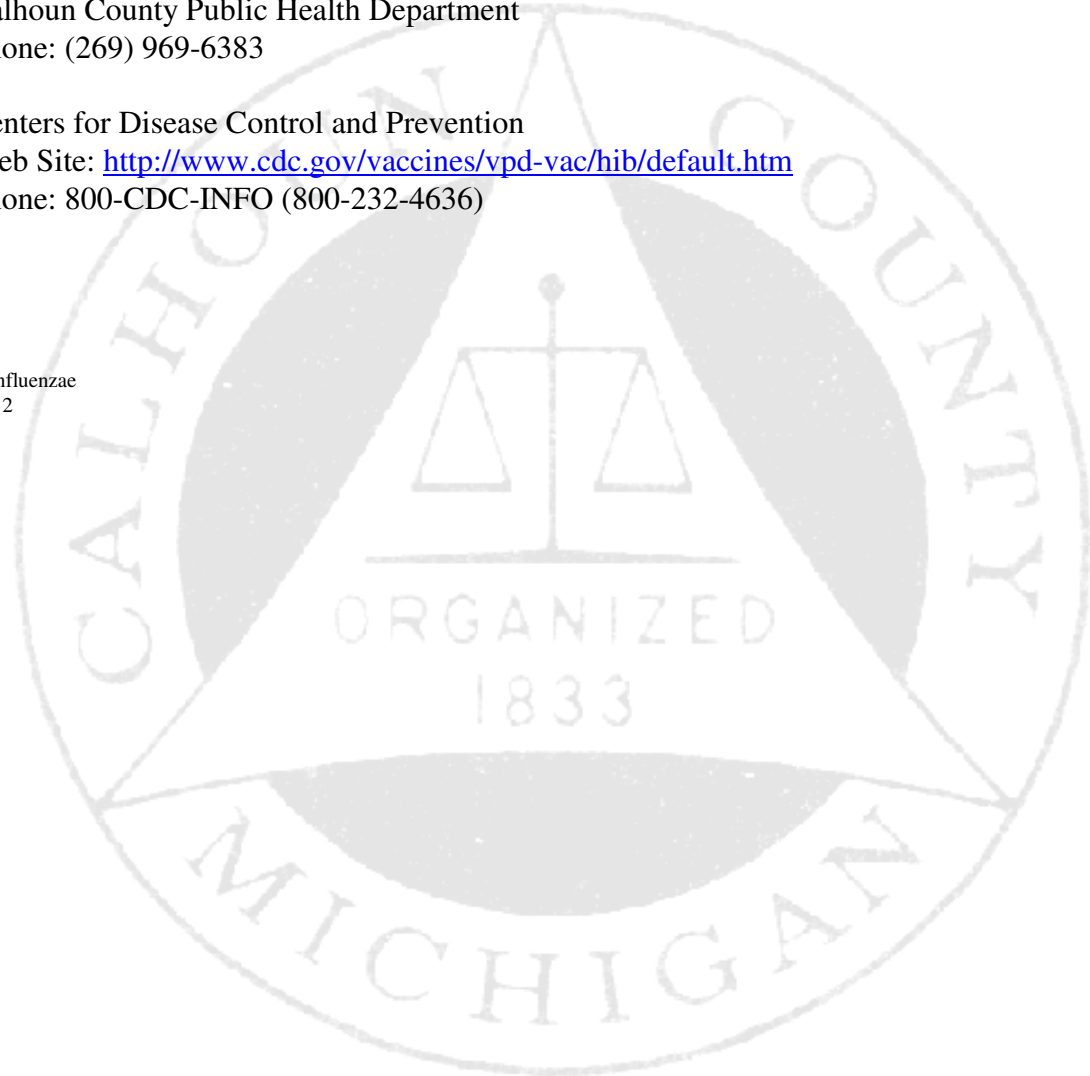
Phone: (269) 969-6383

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Web Site: <http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/vpd-vac/hib/default.htm>

Phone: 800-CDC-INFO (800-232-4636)

Haemophilus influenzae
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This fact sheet is meant to provide general health information and is not intended to be medical advice or otherwise take the place of your doctor's orders or to diagnose your specific health problems. Check with your doctor if you have any questions or concerns about your health.

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